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## ABSTRACT

In order to take into consideration the unique experiences, background and language differences inherent among multicultural populations for the purposes of career assessment, the process must allow for the counselee to construct their own story. This paper suggests the use of Haldanes Dependable Strengths Articulation Process (DSAP) for these purposes. The author proposes that the Haldane DSAP process is appropriate for all populations, including special needs, alternative education students as well as multicultural groups. The DSAP process requires many hours of well-supervised group work to help counselees work through the process, but the benefits to the individuals with regards to building self-esteem are limitless. It is recommended that this is an excellent process for use with clients/students who are not ready to benefit from the use of more traditional career assessment tools. (GCP)

# Career As Story: An Introduction to the Haldane Idiographic Method of Career Assessment for Multicultural Populations

by

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# Career As Story: An Introduction to the Haldane Idiographic Method of Career Assessment for Multicultural Populations

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## The Need For A Specialized Multicultural Career Counseling

One of the more definitive guides on using career assessment instruments has been Kapes and Whitfield's *A Counselor's Guide to Career Assessment Instruments* (2001). In this most recent edition of the *Guide*, Edwin L. Herr, in discussing some of the emerging issues in career assessment, noted that "As a more pluralistic and culturally diverse population translates into a more diverse workforce, questions arise about how to create a more diverse assessment system for adults that accommodates language differences, differences in educational backgrounds in immigrant's countries of origin, and how responses to these issues should be incorporated into the training and the career assessment tools for employment and career counselors engaged in career assessment in different settings" (Herr, 2001, pp. 19-20). Consistent with Herr's call for a "more diverse assessment system for adults that accommodates language differences" is the belief that humans are natural storytellers, and, in a culturally diverse, postmodern world people experiencing the same event (or reading the same career assessment test items) may provide widely varying narratives of what they saw, heard, and felt (Ivey, D'Andrea, Ivey, & Simek-Morgan, 2002). Clearly, the challenge in multicultural career counseling is to incorporate a career assessment system that captures these "widely varying narratives" while providing a valid and reliable means for recommending career choices consistent with a client's interests, abilities and values that are embedded within their unique (idiographic) life story. And of course at the core of career choice is the unique personality of the individual (Holland, 1959). The trait psychologist Gordon Allport, in his *Pattern and Growth in Personality* (1937, 1961), stated it best when he noted that "the more we search out, and discover, what is uniform in nature, the more urgent it becomes to account for uniqueness in the form and pattern of the whole" (1961). Allport further concluded that, "Thus science is a nomothetic discipline. Individuality cannot be studied by science, but only by history, art, or biography whose methods are not nomothetic (seeking universal laws), but idiographic" (Allport, 1961, pp. 8-9). Allport goes on to admit that the psychology of personality is not exclusively nomothetic, nor exclusively idiographic, it seeks an equilibrium between the two but there is a need to redress the present one-sidedness of psychology's nomothetic approach (1961). It was just such a redress in the traditional nomothetic approach to career counseling that caused Haldane to note in his *Young Adult Career Planning* (Haldane, Faith, & Dahlgren, 1962) that "any workable theory should call for a pattern of career progress or career change. But since traditionalists are in

charge of most guidance and counseling courses, as well as publications of the profession, ideas of the modernist get around slowly, or may even be suppressed” (p.8). It is Haldane’s process, originally known in 1960 as Success Factor Analysis (SFS), adapted in 1974 to System to Identify Motivated Skills (SIMS), and currently entitled the Dependable Strengths Articulation Process (DSAP), that is presented here. It should be noted that despite these name changes the actual assessment process has remained essentially unchanged and is presented here under the DSAP heading.

### **The Haldane Dependable Strengths Articulation Process For Multicultural Populations**

In order to take into consideration the unique experiences, background and language differences inherent among multicultural populations for the purposes of career assessment, the process must allow for the counselee to construct their own story. Using a biographical questionnaire the counselee is asked to identify 15-20 good experiences. A good experience is qualified by Haldane (1981) as any experience that contains all the following three qualifiers: something you enjoyed doing, something you did well, and something you were proud of. These are not milestones like graduating from high school with high honors but actual things you did or accomplished, like organizing the school newspaper, tearing down and putting back together your old motorcycle engine, or teaching your sibling how to swim. Prior to starting the process the counselee is given an outline of four steps to keep in mind prior to writing: (1) accept yourself as unique in the kind of excellence that is always growing within you, (2) recognize that the elements of your excellence probably have been demonstrated from time to time in your life, (3) believe that by carefully identifying your achievements (good experiences) you will find the pattern of skills and talents you have repeatedly used to make those achievements happen, and (4) concern yourself with using this pattern of your self-motivated skills or strengths, the reliable elements of your special excellence.

These 15-20 narratives can be written in any language (provided there is someone to translate them) or spoken into a tape recorder for later transcription. The next step in the process can be undertaken either in a one-on-one process between the counselor and counselee or in small groups of not more than three or four. The DSAP form always uses the small group approach. In this group format one counselee shares the gist of their story (good experience) while another records the verb or verb statements used by the storyteller. These verbs represent the skills or potential strengths of the storyteller. The third counselee is coached on how to interview the storyteller such that they never lead or put words into the mouth of the storyteller but rather ask questions in the open ended format such “how did you do that” or “tell me more about that” or “tell me about how you organize” when setting up that school newspaper. The goal is to probe deeper into the background of the particular verb or verb phrase to see if there is much more to it. I call this the “opening the door” to the underlying roots of the verb/verb phrase. The recorder all the while is jotting down each of the newly “brought out” verbs. In this way the process roots out skills or strengths embedded in the story (good experience). The determination as to whether or not these are “dependable” strengths (something one uses over and over regardless of what kind of activity one is

engaged in) is based on a cross checking of the verb lists across the entire 15-20 good experiences written about. Generally, 3-5 verbs will emerge as reoccurring throughout the majority of the good experiences. These are what Haldane refers to as your “dependable strengths.” Other analysis of the stories can reveal whether or not the counselee prefers working with people, data, things, or ideas when using these dependable strengths and under what circumstances one is most motivated to use them. The process is simple and straightforward but takes practice and constant supervision of the groups in the beginning to insure the interviewers are not “leading” the storyteller or putting “words in their mouth.” Generally, experienced counselors have the most difficulty with this aspect, as they want to “interpret” or “analyze” the story rather than simply aid in getting the storyteller’s “whole” story out.

Once the counselee has a grasp of their primary strengths it is a simple matter of asking them if in the work they do now, do they use their “dependable strengths” on a regular basis. It is not unusual to find counselees that are not using any of their strengths and that their dissatisfaction with their work has always been quite obvious to them but they did not know why until this process uncovered their true skills. And for those planning new careers it becomes less important as to which kind of job or industry they enter as long as they are given a chance to utilize the majority of their strengths. This is what Haldane states as being the cornerstone to achieving career satisfaction and success to each person.

### Evaluation and Conclusions

There is little doubt that the need for adapted forms of career assessment for multicultural populations is going to explode over the next decade. Large states such as California have already reached the point where the minority cultures now represent the majority of the state’s population. If career counselors are going to maintain a place of respect within these cultures they are going to have to find new ways of embracing the diversity that exists in these communities. The Haldane approach discussed in this paper is currently being successfully used in China and South Africa and has been operating in prison rehabilitation programs as well.

The primary strength of the Haldane’s DSAP approach is also in some ways its greatest weakness. It is so straightforward and pragmatic that it often gets dismissed as too simplistic to work. One of the ways that I have attempted to validate the effectiveness of the *DSAP* process is to compare the results with those obtained using Holland’s (1987) *Self Directed Search*. By task analyzing the 300-plus occupations in our state’s career information system and developing a crosswalk between DSAP results and our career information system I have been able to correlate the career choices selected by my counseling graduate students enrolled in the career counseling class with their results on the *Self Directed Search*. Although not designed as a formal study, I have found rather high correlations between the two systems (80-90 percent).

Thus, in the absence of any other known validated systems for providing an alternative to nomothetic (norm based) career assessments for multicultural populations, I feel comfortable in recommending the Haldane DSAP process. Moreover, Haldane specifically offered to each high school counselor to learn, free, the techniques presented in his *The*

*Young Adult Career Planning* book (1962). No matter which of Haldane's publications you pick up, they all subscribe to the exact same process. And there are regularly scheduled trainings given through the College of Education at the University of Washington in Seattle. Those trainings cover a much more comprehensive curriculum approach in which the DSAP assessment process is included.

In summary, I believe that the Haldane DSAP process is appropriate for all populations, including special needs, alternative education students as well as multicultural groups. As is obvious, the DSAP process is not amenable to a "three sessions and a cloud of dust" process but takes many hours to help counselee's work through the process. By using well-supervised small groups much of the work can be done by the counselee's themselves. The benefits to the individuals in these groups with regard to building self-esteem are limitless as each member of the group is working to uncover the strengths of each other and I do not believe there is a stronger reinforcer of self-esteem than that which comes from peer reinforcement. Obviously, you would not be able to use this with every high school or college student but you could certainly use it with those clients/students who are not truly ready to benefit from the use of the more traditional career assessment tools listed in *A Counselor's Guide to Career Assessment Instruments* (Kapes & Whitfield, 2001).

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